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TO : Department of State

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FROM : Amconsul, Paramaribo

DATE: January 29, 1970

SUBJECT: National Council for Borders Installed; Surinam-French Guiana Border Disputes; Extension of Surinam's Northern Border

REF:

National Council for Borders Installed

On January 2, 1970 Minister-President J. Sedney officially appointed the Surinam National Council for Borders (Nationale Raad voor de Landsgrenzen). This council consists of two groups: a specially appointed Committee of Experts, and the previously existing Parliamentary Committee for Borders. Sedney stated that the National Council for Borders was an advisory body only and would not have negotiating responsibilities. He added that the Council of Ministers hoped to receive advice within two weeks from the new council on the matter of the border question with French Guiana.

The Parliamentary Committee for Borders is composed of the following Staten members: A. Kamperveen (PNP), Chairman; L. Mungra (VHP), Ch. Calor (NPS), A. Quintus Bosz (PNP), E. Bruma (PNR), A. Karamat Ali (NPS), S. Sitaram (VHP), R. Sardjoe (VHP), and J. Sariman (SRI). The committee of Experts are: Hans Lim a Po, Chairman; P. Radhakishun, C. D. Ooft, D. G. A. Findlay, H. Wells, G. Elias, J. E. J. Wong a Ton, H. G. Coleridge and H. S. Adhin.

Surinam-French Guiana Border Disputes

According to Maitali A. Akrum, the Director of the Surinam Office of Foreign Relations, the French Government is anxious to reach an agreement with the Governments of Surinam and the Netherlands on the location of the southern border which separates French Guiana and Surinam, and on the location of that part of their northern border which extends into the Atlantic Ocean from the mouth of the Marowijne River. Akrum said that the French Govern-

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ment has been making frequent suggestions to the Dutch Embassy in Paris as well as through the French Embassy in The Hague to begin discussions on this subject.

✓ The disputed land area is that portion of land that would accrue to French Guiana or Surinam depending on which river demarcates the southern boundary between these two countries.* The Dutch and Surinam Governments view the Lawa and the Marowini Rivers as being the correct boundaries while the French Government on various historical occasions has claimed as boundaries the Litani or Oelemari Rivers, conceding the Lawa as a boundary; or, has claimed even the Tapahahony River as a boundary, thereby rejecting the Lawa. Akrum said that he felt that the French probably would not pursue claims to the area demarcated by the Tapanahony or Oelemari Rivers and that the real issue would be whether to consider the Litani or Marowini Rivers as being the southern boundary. Since Surinam already claims that the Marowini is the correct boundary it seems unlikely that the French will agree with that viewpoint unless Surinam makes some kind of compromise settlement by granting concessions elsewhere. It is possible that France will ask that the angle of the border extending out from the mouth of the Marowijne River into the Atlantic Ocean be resolved according to their claims. A fishing fleet operates out of St. Laurant near the mouth of the Marowijne and France may be interested in this northern boundary because of wanting to establish jurisdiction over fishing grounds in that area.

Akrum emphasized that the Surinam Government is anxious to settle its border problems with French Guiana but he explained that the new administration had not yet found time to discuss this matter. He said official negotiations would be carried out in Paris and the Hague by Dutch Foreign Minister Luns but with the advice and consent of Dr. J. D. V. Polanen, Surinam's Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague. Any changes in the borders presently recognized by Surinam would require majority approval of the Surinam Staten.

* The Northern boundary between French Guiana and Surinam is the Marowijne River which flows into the Atlantic Ocean and which is formed at Stoelman's Island by the merger of the Tapanahony and Lawa Rivers. The Oelemari, Litani, and Marowini Rivers are lower branches of the Lawa.

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In contrast to the Surinam-Guyana border dispute which has become a nationalistic issue in Surinam because of certain incidents, the Surinam-French Guiana border dispute has been a low-key, un-emotional issue so far. The Government and people of Surinam seem willing to solve this problem by compromise and there is presently no nationalistic pressure on the administration which might make a compromise settlement politically difficult. This attitude probably will continue unless the French make intractable demands which the Surinamers consider grossly unfair--such as insisting on the Tapanahony River as being the border; or, if the French were to make some move into the disputed area that the Surinamers considered aggressive. At this point, however, according to Mr. Akram, chances appear excellent that an amiable settlement will be found. The Surinam Council for Borders will also study all existing border disputes, including that with Guyana, and any others which may arise.

Extension of Surinam's Northern Border

Regarding another matter relating to borders, Akram said that most Surinamers would like to extend their country's northern border to two hundred miles from the coast, just as several other South American countries have done, in order to control the fishing in that area. He said that the Statute of the Realm making Surinam part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands sets the present twelve mile limit but that this probably will be enlarged to two hundred miles when Surinam becomes independent.

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